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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
Dana P. Jacobson, Publisher/Managing Editor
Joseph Mirando, Managing Editor
Rob Mahlert, Associate Editor

Atari Online News, Etc. Staff

Dana P. Jacobson -- Editor
Joe Mirando -- "People Are Talking"
Michael Burkley -- "Unabashed Atariophile"
Albert Dayes -- "CC: Classic Chips"
Rob Mahlert -- Web site
Thomas J. Andrews -- "Keeper of the Flame"

With Contributions by:

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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Okay, so now that I know how eskimos feel in the cold, I have a new respect for them. Somebody please turn on the heat up here in the Northeast! Man, it's cold up here! Now I know why so many people from New England pack up and move to Florida! This is winter, with a vengeance. Once the sun goes down, I wait and dread when one of our dogs starts whining to go out. <g>

It's still fairly quiet out there these days after the holidays. The news is still picking up a bit, but my mind is still not spinning much these days with topics to rant about. Maybe I'm having a senior moment or something; it usually doesn't take much for me to editorialize about one topic or another these days! There will be something soon enough that will get a rile out of me, I'm sure. Something to look forward to, I guess.

So, in the meantime, I'm going to grab a cup of hot chocolate, take the dogs out one last time for the night, and then get bundled up and stay warm.

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. I was going to talk about the Mars Rover that touched down this past week and have something interesting and uplifting to say about it, but my comments this week are going to have a sad tone, since I've got to relay some sad news. This week, two of us here at A-ONE have suffered losses.

Our own TJ Andrews, Keeper of the Flame, lost his brother to a short-term illness earlier this week. And today my grandfather passed away. Now, normally I don't dwell on issues of this type here within these pages, but the fact that two of us have lost loved ones gives me pause.

Without intruding upon anyone's privacy, these were two people at pretty

much opposite ends of the age scale... From mid-30's to early 90's in age. And of course familiarity with computers is tied to their respective ages. TJ's brother was even an Atari computer user who liked playing games on his Atari 800 and was Treasurer of the Atari Computer Users of Syracuse Users Group. My grandfather had trouble grasping the idea of computers as information-providing devices and exactly how easy it could be to use them.

I didn't know TJ's brother at all, and I've never even met TJ in person. But we have, nonetheless, been good friends for several years thanks to email and instant messaging , so I (to borrow a phrase from Bill Clinton) feel his pain.

My grandfather had been 'slipping' for the past several months and I have had plenty of time to prepare myself for the unavoidable. Yes, it still came as a shock and will require a sizable emotional adjustment, but I'll recover as we all do when we have to.

At least once a month, my grandfather would ask me about how I was able to chat with relatives on the other side of the country "on the computer". What does it cost? How do you know they're there? How do you start talking to them? What do you do when you're done?... questions like that.

He simply couldn't wrap his mind around the fact that there was no toll charge involved like there is with long distance calls, and that you really don't need to know anything too technical to make it all work.

Most times, after I'd explained it to him in terms that I thought he COULD wrap his mind around, he'd just laugh and shake his head as if to say, "you must be pulling my leg".

After all, in his day, televisions were for watching ball games and the evening news, the phonograph and radio were for listening to music, and typewriters were for 'office girls'. You didn't expect to listen to music on the telephone, write a letter on the radio, or get in touch with family through your camera. The idea of a multi-purpose device that could do so many things so well so quickly must have seemed like a fantasy to him.

Now don't get me wrong, I'm not making fun of my grandfather. I'm simply looking at his situation. When he was a young man, the telephone was the hot new technology to his family. He was the first guy in town to buy a television. He'd been building crystal radios for years, so this new "vacuum tube" technology was cutting-edge to him. It was a 'revolution'.

He was able to appreciate the computer age without actually participating in it. He seemed to understand that he didn't understand and simply accepted it as the cost of living a long life. He was comfortable with it.

But I am left to wonder just what miracle machines will be invented and in common use by the time I start closing in on a century.... and how well I'll understand what I don't understand.

This is going to be a short column, since there are tons of family things to do. So let's get to the news, hints, tips, and info from the UseNet.

## From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Carey Christenson asks about an accelerator:

"Does anyone have any information on the F/X BlowUp card for the Falcon 030?? I just acquired a Falcon 030 with this card in it and wish to see technical specs on this card. Any web-sites or information on this card would be greatly appreciated. I also acquired a 1040 STf with 4 megs of STram soldered in place and this 1040 STf has a PC Ditto II card soldered on to a LONG chip in front of the DISK DRIVE.

Any information that someone can provide for this adapter would be greatly appreciated also. The board is about 1 inch by 3 inches and has 2 rows of pins the

whole width (3 inch direction) of the board. If anyone knows what this board is and how I can utilize its capabilities I would greatly appreciate the information."

Paul Lefebvre tells Carey:

"Back in 1990 or so I had a pc-ditto II card installed in my 1040STfm. It was a good hardware PC emulator that used the NEC V30 chip. From what I recall, it connected directly on top of the 68000 chip. It does require special software to activate, which I no longer have. There was a lot of controversy when pc-ditto II was first released as it was too large to fit in a lot of people's STs. It also was not supposed to require soldering, but those who were able to get it working almost always had to solder it."

Lonny Pursell tells Paul:

"Happened to follow your web link, and the file downloads seem to be broken? Tried to download GENEVA_C.ZIP but I get an error 404."

Paul tells Lonny:

"Sorry about that. I recently reorganized the file structure. Until I get the links fixed, try this:

http://www.logicalvue.com/atari/software/freeware/ "

Paul Lefebvre now asks about replacing the hard drive in his Falcon:

"I want to thank everyone with their help over the last couple months with my CD-ROM problems. I could never get my AppleCD 300e to work with my Falcon, but I picked up a Plextor 4Plex Plus on eBay and that worked right away without any troubles.

My next project is to replace the hard drive in the Falcon with a bigger model. My Falcon has a lowly 65MB Seagate drive. It works fine, but I figure it can't hurt to have more.

I picked up an 810MB drive off eBay for $10 but have not had any luck getting it to work with. It hooks up fine and I can hear it spin up, but

for some reason it renders the floppy drive inoperable so I can't run any of my hard driver software to see if is recognized.  I don't know the make of the drive as its labels were removed.

Since I'm about to give up on that drive I'm wondering if people could recommend some drive models that they know work in a Falcon and also perhaps some places to purchase them.  I'm thinking 1 to 2GB ought to be enough."

'Tim' tells Paul:

"You need an updated Hard Drive Driver to make it work with larger drives.  HDDr iver, SCSI-Tools are two that work with  larger drives.  I have used 2GB, 4GB a

nd 8GB laptop drives in mine."

Paul replies:

"I am using CBHD as my hard disk driver, but as I mentioned I cannot even run it since the floppy drive stops reading disks when the hard drive is plugged in.

Although I had seen the hard disk driver topic discussed much in the archives, I have found no reference to the associated floppy drive problem.

I did get the hard drive to be briefly recognized by mucking around with the jumper switches until the floppy worked but I was unable to partition it using CBHD or AHDI 6.  Now it doesn't even want to spin up, so I'm just writing it off as a bad drive."

John Garone tells Paul:

"I'm not the resident expert nor do I know if it effects floppy recognition but I do know that improper termination would effect the system The last physical drive in the chain must be terminated by a jumper on the hard drive, passive terminator on the last connector and I've heard of resistors on the drive."

Derryck Croker adds:

"Paul doesn't say whether this is an IDE or SCSI drive! I guess that this is an IDE drive and that it's actually faulty. No termination issues with these, only jumper positions Master, Slave, Cable select that I know of.

For SCSI drives I recommend setting TERMPWR to ON (with a jumper), and then either using the drive's own termination resistors if it's the only SCSI device, or removing them and rely on an external terminator on the second SCSI port on the case (better, as this allows extending the system at a later date)."

John Oakes asks about networking:

"I am trying to get XP and TT030 to talk to each other. I follow all the instructions. My card NE2000 show mac as ff.ff.ff.ff.ff on the control panel via sting setup. I noticed that on the two light only the green

flashes and orange stays off when I connect Ethernet cable this my setup.
TT030=EtherNet=Cable=Hub=Cable=Ethernet=XP
TT030 192.168.255.1
XP    192.168.255.2

Any clues would help."

Mark Bedingfield tells John:

"The ff.ff.ff.ff.ff, if that IS your mac and not an error, is a broadcast address. This will cause copious problems. I have heard of some cheap cards that had this address because the manufacturer stuffed up the firmware. Or, as Kenneth points out the TT may not be able to read the Data from the card correctly. The green leds are generally Link, and the orange transmit. What response to you get from a simple ICMP (Ping) test? I don't suppose you have another ISA Ne2000 to try?"

Djordje Vukovic adds:

"To this might be added that in "192.168.255.1"  and "192.168.255.2" the "255" is not exactly politically correct, though probably is passable for most software. Probably would have been a better idea to use "0" or any other number instead.

Are you sure that the cables are OK? I have seen these symptoms (flashing "link" light) with faulty cables. Did you connect the RJ-45 connectors yourself? Do all the leads in the cable work? Also, I have seen too many times UTP cables, even made by paid "professionals", which were not laid out correctly. It is important to know: wires in an UTP cable are NOT identical (orange, green, blue and brown pairs being twisted with different pitches, etc.).  It is not sufficient just to make a "correct" pin-to-pin  connection using whichever lead from the cable comes conveniently over a pin on the connector being connected first. Correct wire colours must be put to appropriate pins- otherwise you will get a cable which will appear OK when tested with an ohm-meter but may, or may NOT work on lengths of 2-3 meters and at 0M1bit/s, and most certainly will not work at longer lengths or 100Mbits./ Also note that a cable for computer-hub connection is not the same as  a cable for direct computer-computer connection (the latter having orange and green pairs exchanged on one end)."

Michael Schwingen tells Djordje:

"Assuming a /24 netmask (ie. 255.255.255.0), these are perfectly valid addresses. What makes you think otherwise?"

Djordje tells Michael:

"I sort of remember reading it in some RFC or another. I do not have the RFC collection or any tcp/ip manuals handy now to check, that would have to wait until I got back to work after the holidays (currently being Christmas around here), but I do have a (rather old) tcp/ip tutorial text originated at Rutgers University, which -does- say that both "255" and "0" should be avoided in any of the four octets of a network or host address, because they are reserved for special use, translatable in human terms roughly as

0 = this/unknown (network) and 255 = all/any (hosts/networks).

However, that not being an official document, I will allow that it may be in error- but it makes sense to me, as, e.g. class B range is defined as 128.1 to 191.254. and class C range 192.1.1 to 223.254.254. - i.e. "1" and "254"  not "0" and "255". Besides, if, for example, 192.168.1.255 would be an address mask for a broadcast within the limits of a 192.168.1. (private) network, AFAIK it is permissible to specify an address mask 192.168.255.255 for a broadcast that would reach as far out as a complete set of interconnected 192.168. private networks- and then it would not be possible to differentiate between a broadcast and a 192.168.255 network. Or maybe it is more for the benefit of human operators than computers themselves (i.e. avoiding the use of some values in order to make the addresses and masks more readable?)

It may also be that different implementations of tcp/ip differ in their treatment of this- and some other items; AFAIK in tcp/ip of DOS/Windows one does not have much choice in specifying broadcast masks, and on the other hand. for example,  TCPIP of OpenVMS insists on specifying an explicit broadcast mask when defining each network (off-topic, I also remember that once it took me a lot of persuasion to convince the DNS in Windows NT4 to use a current reverse-lookup once for e.g. 192.168.25.128/26 subnet - it insisted on automatically creating 25-168-192-in_addr... etc. instead of 128-168-192-in_add..r., even though all the subnets and their masks have been correctly defined in the routing table, and the same zoning worked perfectly in DNS of OpenVMS TCPIP)."

Mark Bedingfield tells Djordje:

"According to Cisco ( I completed both the Netacad and CCNA this year), that is fine, as long as the last octet is not Bcast or Network. So 192.168.0.1 to 192.168.255.254 are valid ranges for class C IP’s. Cisco also say that you should never use the first or last subnet. Thought the RFC say you can. Although this is a different situation:-). Most people use 192.168.0.1-255. But, by your definition this would be invalid too, because the third octet is 0. It is the first 2 bits of the octet that determines the Class, http://www.faqs.org/rfcs/rfc1918.html seems pretty good as an explanation."

Michael jumps in again and tells Mark:

""Classes" are obsolete since the introduction of CIDR. All that counts is the netmask you use on your net - it is perfectly valid to use a 10.* address with eg. a /24 (255.255.255.0) or /12 (255.240.0.0) netmask, as long as all your machines are configured the same (which is always required for IP to work).

When using 10.0.0.0/12 as a net, 10.0.255.255 is a valid, non-broadcast address - 10.15.255.255 would be the broadcast address in that case. An IP implementation that confuses 10.0.255.255 in this case with a broadcast address is simply broken, and will not be able to reliably communicate with other, conforming implementations, since there are special rules regarding broadcast packets."

Well folks, that’s it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Sony PSP In November?
Next Generation Xbox!
ApeXtreme PC Game Console!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

## Sony Narrows Date for PSP Launch

Sony has provided a little more detail into the launch schedule of its much-anticipated PSP handheld gaming device.

The company had previously stated that it plans to launch the device worldwide in the fourth quarter of this year. However, Chris Deering, the recently appointed president of Sony Europe, said in an interview with the company's PlayStation.com Web site that the current schedule calls for a November launch.

"There's no official date for its unveiling, but it has been announced that the target date for its global launch is November 2004, so I'm pretty sure it'll be widely announced plenty of time ahead of that," he was quoted as saying.

A spokesperson at Sony Computer Entertainment, the subsidiary responsible for the company's gaming business, downplayed the interview and said that the official launch date remains the fourth quarter of this year and is no more precise than that.

But she stopped short of saying that Deering was wrong in identifying November as the probable launch month.

Few details are currently available about the gaming device, though Sony did show a design concept during an investor conference in New York in November 2003.

Earlier in 2003 at the E3 show, where the PSP was first announced, the company revealed that it will include a 4.5-inch, wide-screen TFT LCD with a resolution of 480 by 272 pixels, 3D graphics, support for MPEG4 video, and a USB 2.0 port.

Sony also said that the player will use a new media format called Universal Media Disc (UMD). The 2.4-inch optical discs will be encased in a cartridge and will hold up to 1.8GB of data, the company said at the time.

## Microsoft at Work on Next Xbox

Microsoft Corp. is hard at work on the next generation of its Xbox video game console, even as the current version starts to show its full potential as an entertainment hub, founder and Chairman Bill Gates said on Wednesday.

In an interview ahead of his keynote address at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, Gates told Reuters the company would look to extend the functionality of the Xbox, the only game console to ship with a built-in hard drive and Ethernet connection.

"We are pushing the boundaries in terms of expanding what people think of as what the device can do," Gates said.

Last year, Microsoft released a title called "Xbox Music Mixer" that allows users to download music and photo albums from their PC to the console.

Later this year, Gates said, Microsoft will release a kit for the Xbox that will extend the functions of its Windows XP Media Center Edition to the console, turning it into a set-top box that allows the playback of live and recorded video, music and photos.

"You'll see us keep pushing the boundaries there," Gates said.

Microsoft has lately been active in recruiting staff to work on gaming hardware, although Gates declined to talk in much detail about the company's plans for the next generation of the Xbox, which is widely expected to come in 2005 or 2006.

Market leader Sony Corp., which has dominated the current generation of consoles with its PlayStation 2, has been similarly circumspect about its plans for a PS3.

"In terms of the next round, hey it's a new game. We're not showing our hand and I don't think Sony's showing their hand," Gates said. "We're doing some very cool work but that's really all we say at this point."

Despite heavy competition, though, Gates said he was pleased with the market position of the money-losing Xbox, which was released in Nov. 2001 and has battled Nintendo Co. Ltd. for second place in the U.S. market.

"Our goal in this generation was to be one of the leaders, and we feel like we've accomplished that very well," Gates said.

## Apex to Roll Out Game Console

The personal computer has been losing ground to video game consoles for years. But an alliance of several companies hopes to reverse that trend by creating a computer that can play PC games on a television as conveniently as a console.

Ontario, Calif.-based Apex Digital, the No. 1 maker of DVD players for the U.S. market, is expected to introduce Thursday the ApeXtreme PC game console, which will play more than 2,000 PC games on a TV set.

The PC has long been hamstrung as a game machine because of its inability to easily play games on a TV set and slow loading.

The ApeXtreme aims to correct those deficiencies. The machine will debut in the spring and sell for a $399 suggested retail price, with a version selling for $299. That makes it far more expensive than the $179 Xbox and Play-Station 2 consoles. But the console's producers say the machine will be able to do a lot more things, like playing MP3 music files and displaying videos and slide shows.

Sony's new PSX, a similar multifunction entertainment box that plays PS 2 games, is selling in Japan for about $800.

The ApeXtreme will include PC components from Taipei, Taiwan, chip maker Via Technologies as well as software from Digital Interactive Systems, a Long Beach start-up.

"We believe the timing is right because the technology is there and the price is there," said Richard Brown, associate vice president of international marketing at Via Technologies, which provided several chips for the box and designed much of the hardware.

The personal computer has always been a nice gaming solution at the high end of the market. But with prices for a game-worthy computer reaching $2,000 or more, it misses most of the mainstream players.

Apex's console has features that make it less expensive than a standard PC. It will run a version of Microsoft's Windows XP operating system for consumer applications. Via will provide its low-cost 1.2-gigahertz C3 microprocessor, a chip set and graphics for the machine. Digital Interactive adds its DISCover "drop and play" software that allows the machine to immediately begin playing any game that is inserted into the machine's DVD drive. Gone are the hassles of installing a game on a PC.

Loren Kaiser, vice president of operations at Digital Interactive, said the DISCover software makes PC gaming more convenient, allowing someone to eject a game in the middle of playing without crashing the computer.

The PC will still have a tough time beating the consoles, which are selling in the tens of millions. Consoles like the Xbox are easier to load, rarely crash, and are designed for viewing on a TV set. But PC makers may be able to update their hardware every six months.

ABS Computer and Alienware, both makers of PC gaming machines, also are planning to launch living-room PC gaming machines that use DISCover software.

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Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

## Music Downloads Fall After RIAA Lawsuits

The music industry's controversial lawsuits against online song swappers appear to have forced U.S. computer users to severely curb their free music downloading habit, according to new research released on Sunday.

The percentage of Americans who downloaded music from the Internet fell to 14 percent over the four weeks ended Dec. 14, from 29 percent in a 30-day sample conducted in March, April and May, according to a telephone survey of 1,358 Internet users conducted by the Pew Internet & American Life Project.

Since September, the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) has filed about 400 lawsuits against music downloaders, claiming "egregious" copyright infringement and seeking up to $150,000 per violation.

About half of the people hit with such lawsuits have settled out of court, usually for $5,000 or less, while others have mounted fierce legal challenges to the lawsuits.

The number of downloaders fell to about 18 million people in the winter period, from 35 million in the spring, the Pew study found.

The steepest drops in usage were found among women, people with some college education and parents with children living at home. Students and broadband users also showed large drops in downloading.

In addition, the research showed that the use of peer-to-peer file sharing programs, which allow users to swap music for free, fell significantly in November from the year earlier.

The user base of leading platform Kazaa shrank by 15 percent while Grokster's declined 59 percent, according to comScore Media Metrix, Pew's data partner for the study.

Just last month, a federal appellate court handed a surprise setback to the U.S. recording industry, ruling that record labels could no longer demand via subpoena that Internet service providers release the names of people who swap music over the Web.

Going forward, the labels must file lawsuits against anonymous "John Doe" defendants, then get subpoenas from a judge to get their names and addresses. Meanwhile, the accused get the right to contest the charges before their identities are revealed.

With free file downloading curbed, comScore said music lovers flocked to Web sites that provide downloads for a fee of around 99 cents per song.

Among the most popular of the paid services are Napster.com, the formerly free swapping site that was relaunched by Roxio Inc. in October, and Apple Computer Inc.'s iTunes.

## Spam Is Still Flowing Into E-Mail Boxes

Computer users hoping that a new federal law would help cut the spam flowing to their in-boxes so far have been disappointed.

Since President Bush signed the new restrictions into law Dec. 16 and they went into effect Jan. 1, spam-filtering companies and Internet providers report little change in spam patterns, which have relentlessly marched to higher levels over the past two years. Estimates vary, but spam accounts for roughly 60 percent of all e-mail traffic, with costs to fight it exceeding $10 billion a year.

At California-based Postini Inc., which provides e-mail protection and filtering for businesses, spam reached a new high last week, accounting for 84.9 percent of the roughly 1 billion pieces of e-mail it handles each week.

"We're not seeing the hard-core spammers cleaning up their act in any way," said Andrew Lochart, Postini's director of product marketing.

At Brightmail Inc., the leading spam-filtering company, the number has held steady at about 60 percent of the e-mail it handles. Internet account providers Earthlink and America Online said they also have seen little measurable change in spam patterns in the past couple of weeks.

The new law is designed to attack the most nefarious spammers and their techniques for avoiding detection. The law makes it illegal to disguise the originating Internet address of spam, to use misleading subject lines, and to electronically "scrape" or copy e-mail addresses from Web sites that then can be used to send spam or be sold to other marketers.

The law also requires that marketers provide valid ways for consumers to request to be free of future mailings, and to honor those requests. Marketers also must place their physical addresses on their e-mails.

As companies, consumers and policymakers have been more aggressive in trying to combat spam, many bulk e-mailers have moved their operations overseas to avoid detection and prosecution under U.S. laws. That movement has accelerated in the past two weeks, said America Online spokesman Nicholas J. Graham.

Graham said that of the roughly 2.4 billion pieces of spam AOL blocks a day, there has been a roughly 10 percent shift in their origins to overseas-based Internet addresses. AOL's spam-fighting group believes this reflects spammers successfully commandeering unprotected machines and networks overseas and turning them into spam-delivery engines, Graham said.

America Online also has seen an uptick in spam peddling counterfeit Xanax, an anti-anxiety drug, and quick-weight-loss gimmicks, which Graham attributed to the holiday season.

None of the Internet service providers or spam-filtering companies spotted indications that spammers are complying with even pieces of the law.

The most notorious spam still has no unsubscribe links. If the unsolicited e-mail does, it is likely to be used by spammers to confirm that they have hit a valid e-mail address, Lochart said.

This presents consumers with a dilemma. Under the new law, spammers are in violation only if they disregard the opt-out request, but many anti-spam

groups advise consumers not to click those links if the e-mail appears to be from an illegitimate business.

Subject lines also increasingly contain garbled characters to try to evade spam filters, and some simply contain links to Web sites that might contain pornographic content. The new law requires pornographic material to be labeled as such.

In an informal survey of incoming e-mail trapped by spam filters, The Washington Post found one bulk company had included a prominent unsubscribe link and a physical address on its e-mails pitching men's ties and auto loans. The e-mails were sent by Optinrealbig.com, a Colorado-based bulk mailer recently sued by New York state prosecutors for fraud in an elaborate spam scheme.

The company's owner, Scott Richter, has denied the charges.

The new federal law is controversial, because it supplanted some state laws that were more restrictive on e-mail marketing. The early returns fuel critics who have argued that the worst spammers will ignore the new law, while other firms will send more commercial e-mail as long as it is within the rules.

But the Internet and spam-filtering providers said it is still too early to pass judgment on the new law.

## Man Sues Firm Over Unsolicited E-Mails

A man from Washington state has accused a western Pennsylvania telemarketer of sending him hundreds of unsolicited e-mails and has sued the company under his state's anti-spam law.

In a complaint filed in his home state court last month, Jim Gordon of Richland, Wash., said he wants Commonwealth Marketing Group Inc. of Hopwood, Fayette County, to pay him $500 for each piece of spam the company allegedly sent him. According to Gordon, that adds up to more than $600,000 for more than 1,200 messages.

"My motivation is to get this spam stopped," Gordon told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette for a story in Sunday editions. "I sent them a letter saying stop. And they didn't."

Gordon's lawsuit focuses on a Washington law that prohibits the sending of deceptive or misleading e-mails. Gordon's suit also was filed under two other Washington laws governing unfair business practices and harassment.

CMG's e-mails were "designed to entice" him to believe he was applying for a major credit card, such as a VISA or MasterCard, Gordon said. But CMG was really offering its own products and credit.

In his lawsuit, Gordon also accused CMG of using invalid addresses in violation of state law. He received messages from 551 different senders, which he eventually traced to the company, Gordon said.

CMG Chief Executive Officer Robert E. Kane said that his company is the one being wronged. The lawsuit, and a letter Gordon sent the company demanding more than $10,000, amount to a scam, Kane said.

"This guy has requested e-mails from us," Kane said. "Our computers are programmed to identify him. It's a shakedown. It happens all the time. We probably get one or two of these a week."

Gordon said he sent a letter to CMG in August, saying he had received 27 unsolicited e-mails from the company and demanding a check for $10,800, or $400 for each message. The letter threatened that Gordon would bump up the fee up to $500 per e-mail and would contact the Washington attorney general if he didn't hear from CMG officials in a few weeks.

"If payment has not been received by 5 p.m. on Sept. 12, 2003, I will conclude that an out-of-court settlement is not possible," the letter said.

Gordon has also demanded money from three other companies that he said spammed him.

"Its is totally meritless," said Kane, who also denied that the subject lines of his company's e-mails are deceiving. "There's not a shred of truth in it."

CMG has been investigated before.

The firm's owner, Frederick F. Zeigler III, pleaded guilty in February in U.S. District Court in Pittsburgh to tax violations and no contest to bank fraud in connection with a credit card scheme. He is serving a 15-month federal prison sentence.

Prosecutors said Zeigler claimed personal purchases as business expenses.

Zeigler's company marketed credit cards to low-income people and enticed them to charge vacation packages the company sold on the cards, prosecutors said. After doing so, only about $13 in credit remained and the cardholders found their cards rejected when they tried to use them, prosecutors said.

## Pennsylvania Porn Law Blocks Too Much?

A Washington nonprofit group was scheduled on Tuesday to argue against a Pennsylvania child-pornography law that has unintentionally cordoned off wide swaths of the Internet for users in and out of the state.

The arguments will be made before a federal judge in Philadelphia.

Among the 600,000 sites blocked are a community recreation center in Bradford County, Pennsylvania, a tribute to a Paraguayan soccer player, reviews of opera singer Alice Baker, and a vendor of "family edited" DVDs that have nudity and other content removed, the Center for Democracy and Technology said in a court filing.

CDT, the Pennsylvania chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union and Internet provider Plantagenet Inc. have sued to overturn the law, arguing that it amounts to an unconstitutional restraint on free speech.

The law allows district attorneys to require Internet providers to block access to a Web site they believe contains child pornography. State investigators have filed more than 500 requests since April 2002.

But the blocking orders have rendered inaccessible hundreds of thousands of other sites that share the same address, CDT said. Out-of-state users are affected as well because Internet providers such as Time Warner Inc.’s America Online have no easy way to only restrict access for customers in the state.

A better approach would be to sue the pornographers directly, CDT said, or ask the company that hosts the content to remove it.

State investigators said prosecution is expensive and difficult, especially if the suspect is located overseas. Getting a foreign Web-hosting company to cooperate can be difficult as well, Acting Attorney General Gerald Pappert said in a filing.

Internet providers can use a variety of techniques to reduce overblocking, the attorney general said, such as filtering out specific pages rather than entire numerical addresses such as 209.25.162.15 that underpin domain names likewww.example.com.

## America Online to Add Spyware Protection

America Online said on Tuesday that in the coming weeks its Internet services will include a feature that helps users detect and delete "spyware" that secretly tracks Web surfing habits for marketers, and in the worst case could lead to identity theft.

The announcement from AOL comes as MSN, Microsoft Corp.’s online division, rolls out a similar security feature to current users and follows by several months the launch of spyware-blocking capabilities from rival EarthLink Inc.

AOL, the online unit of New York-based Time Warner Inc. which has been fighting to curb customer defections, is using anti-spyware technology from Aluria Software. The new security feature will be available when the company releases a big upgrade to AOL 9.0 in the next few weeks, company spokesman Andrew Weinstein told Reuters. EarthLink, in partnership with Webroot Software, has had the services since October, spokesman Jerry Grasso said.

MSN this week is expanding the availability of its anti-spyware offering to new users. That technology is provided by Network Associates Inc.’s McAfee consumer security division, a Microsoft spokesman
said.

Internet service providers say spyware is the largest undiagnosed problem on the Web, akin to spam in magnitude.

A study last year by the National Cyber Security Alliance found that 91 percent of broadband users have spyware or adware on their home computers, and that in most cases it surreptitiously found its way there via music or file-sharing programs.

Spyware programs have rapidly spread as companies look for ways to gather personal information to use in targeted marketing and advertising campaigns that help boost sales.

While many spyware programs do not pose great security risks, newer

keystroke logging programs track what Web users type while they're logged on and can tease out such sensitive information as social security numbers, e-mail addresses, financial account numbers and passwords.

## Broadband Over Power Lines Hits a Snag

If some radio operators have their way, broadband Internet access may never travel over power lines. Ham radio operators and at least one U.S. federal agency contend that the emerging technology interferes with their radio signals.

The Amateur Radio Relay League (ARRL), a national ham radio association, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency are among the organizations that have raised concerns with the U.S. Federal Communications Commission over possible short-wave radio interference caused by broadband over power lines, often called BPL.

Companies experimenting with BPL, which uses traditional power lines to transmit data over the Internet, have promoted it as an inexpensive-to-deploy alternative to cable-modem or DSL services.

Some BPL supporters champion it as a way for broadband to reach rural and other areas with limited broadband service because of the near ubiquity of power lines.

The two sides are miles apart on the interference issue, which the FCC is examining in a request for public comments that has been ongoing since last April. The ham radio association says it has found radio interference in every place it has tested short-wave BPL systems, while representatives of the BPL industry say they can't find interference caused by their systems.

The FCC's rules already prohibit unlicensed electronic devices, including BPL transmitters, from interfering with licensed devices, such as ham radios. If the FCC were to find interference and enforce its existing rules, most of the BPL industry could be shut down. "If the commission were to follow its rules, that would be the practical effect," says Dave Sumner, chief executive officer of ARRL. "If the commission decides that BPL cannot operate in this country, that'd be fine with us."

Most BPL vendors use devices called repeaters to amplify and clean up the data signal carried on power lines, and those devices, as well as BPL modems, emit frequencies in the same range as radios used by ham radio operators and some emergency responders, according to the ARRL. Some BPL vendors are experimenting with devices that use microwave signals, and the ARRL says those devices would not interfere with ham radios.

But Current Technologies, which offers BPL service in the Cincinnati and Rockville, Maryland, areas, can't find interference caused by its system, says Jay Birnbaum, the company's vice president and general counsel. Current Technologies uses a technology standard called HomePlug, designed to not interfere with other radio signals.

"[Interference] just doesn't exist," Birnbaum says. "They based a lot of their assumptions on outdated noise flow analysis."

Birnbaum accuses the ARRL of being overprotective of its turf. "The decision-maker here is not the ham radio community--the decision-maker is

the FCC," he says. "It's been [ARRL's] policy to oppose any new technology that causes emissions, whether they be harmful or not." ARRL does maintain a Web page listing nine technologies it calls "threats to our amateur bands."

It doesn't make sense for BPL companies like Current Technologies to move forward with their business plans and financing if they're causing interference, because the FCC could immediately shut them down if they did, Birnbaum adds. Any interference the ARRL is measuring might be coming from other licensed radio devices, he says.

"If it turns out I'm trying to make a device or sell a device that would cause interference anytime it's used, it kind of belies logic that I could raise money to do that," Birnbaum says.

The ARRL has posted a video on its Web site showing interference in four BPL test areas, including Current Technologies' Maryland location. "For them to say that [they don't cause interference] shows they don't know what they're talking about," Sumner says of Current's position. "It's a classic case of denial. We'd be glad to go down and show them the interference we've observed on their system."

If the FCC were to enforce its existing rules against interference, ARRL would be happy, Sumner says. ARRL became concerned that the FCC would relax its interference rules when commissioners praised BPL during a commission meeting in April, he says. FCC Chairman Michael Powell called BPL a "monumental breakthrough in technology."

"The benefits don't outweigh the negative consequences," Sumner says. "You're taking a part of the radio spectrum that's unique - it's the only part of the radio spectrum that supports communications long distance without infrastructure."

The FCC has received about 5000 comments on BPL, and a possible next step would be to issue a notice of proposed rulemaking later this year, if the commission determines new rules are needed for BPL, an FCC spokesperson says. In December, the Federal Emergency Management Agency filed comments saying BPL could "severely impair FEMA's mission-essential HF radio operations."

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration at the U.S. Department of Commerce is conducting its own study, and phase one is due out in the first half of 2004. The agency is attempting to address the balance between accommodation of BPL and protection of vital federal and private services, according to an agency spokesperson.

The FEMA objections simply repeat the concerns of the ARRL, says Brett Kilbourne, director of regulatory services and associate counsel at the United PowerLine Council. The FCC should allow BPL to continue operating after it's finished researching the issue, he says.

"Our experience in the field contradicts what [the ARRL is] alleging," Kilbourne says. "We're entirely satisfied that there won't be any interference."

## New Worm Strikes MSN Messenger

A new worm targeting users of Microsoft’s MSN Messenger software has squirmed through the instant messaging application.

The Jitux.A worm comes in the form of an instant message inviting users to click on a URL. By clicking on the URL, users download the jituxramon.exe file, which then becomes resident in their computer’s memory and sends new messages containing the link every five minutes to all contacts stored in MSN Messenger.

Jitux.A has no other apparent destructive effects, nor does it cause changes to the system configuration, according to Panda Software. Panda was among the first to detect the worm, which began spreading rapidly on Friday, largely in Portugal, Spain, and Mexico.

The malicious code is compiled in Visual Basic and runs on Windows 95, 98, ME, NT, 2000, and XP operating systems.

Several antivirus vendors, including Network Associates and Symantec, updated their products and recommend users update their antivirus software and scan for the virus.

Jitux.A isn’t the first worm to wiggle into popular instant messaging networks, particularly MSN Messenger. More than 60 IM vulnerabilities have been published, according to security researchers from Symantec. They range from security holes that could be used to crash IM clients in denial of service attacks to those that allow attackers to install and run malicious code remotely on computers running the vulnerable IM clients.

## Trojan Poses as Windows XP Update

Security companies are warning Internet users about a new Trojan horse program spreading via spam e-mail and masquerading as a Windows XP software update from Microsoft.

The program, known as "Xombe" or "Dloader-L," arrives as an executable attachment in spam e-mail messages purporting to come from windowsupdate@microsoft.com and installs itself on victim’s computers when users open the attachment.

Once installed, Xombe connects to a Web site, then downloads and installs another program, called Mssvc-A, which is a Trojan horse program that conscripts victim computers in distributed denial of service attacks against Web pages, according to antivirus company Sophos.

Xombe is considered a low risk by most antivirus companies, including Sophos, Computer Associates International, and Symantec. The program is not a worm or virus and cannot make copies of itself. Instead, it is distributed using spam e-mail messages.

Those messages read, in part, "Window [sic] Update has determined that you are running a beta version of Windows XP Service Pack 2 (SP1). To help improve the stability of your computer, Microsoft recommends that you remove the beta version of Windows XP SP1."

Recipients are told to "run the file winxp_sp1.exe in attach [sic] and make sure to restart your PC after installation," according to CA, Sophos, and others.

Sophos says it has received several reports of the Xombe Trojan program from customers.

Antivirus companies are offering updated virus definitions to spot Xombe and are providing instructions on removing Trojan programs from infected computers.

Microsoft frequently distributes security bulletins using e-mail, but never includes software updates as attachments, according to the company's Web site.

Most Microsoft software updates are made available through the Windows Update, Microsoft Office Update, or the Microsoft Download Center, the company says.

## Microsoft Unveils New Version of Office for Mac

Microsoft Corp. said on Tuesday that it would start selling a new version of its Office e-mail, document, spreadsheet and presentation software suite for Apple Computer Inc.'s Macintosh personal computer during the first half of 2004.

Microsoft, which dominates the PC industry with its Windows operating system software but also develops applications for the Macintosh, unveiled Office 2004 for Mac at MacWorld Conference & Expo in San Francisco.

Among the new features in the latest Mac version of Office are a project manager that allows users to track e-mails, documents, contacts and meetings related to a project and also take notes within Word, the document program.

Microsoft has promised to continue development of Office for Mac, which counts 7 million users, although the world's largest software maker has already said it will phase out another Mac program that it makes, Internet Explorer for the Mac. Apple is working on its own Web browser, called Safari.

The software will cost the same as Mac v. X, the current version of Office for Macintosh computers, at a retail price of $360, or $140 for academic buyers.

Buyers of Office v. X for Mac will be able to upgrade to Office 2004 for free, Microsoft said.

The Professional version of Office 2004 for Mac, which is marketed toward businesses, will also include Virtual PC for Mac Version 7, the latest version of the software that allows users to run Windows and Windows programs on a Macintosh.

Redmond, Washington-based Microsoft said it will launch the latest version of Virtual PC during the first half of 2004 as well.

## Web Auctioneer eBay to Raise Listing Fees

Online auctioneer eBay Inc. on Monday said it will soon raise the fee it charges to list the most expensive items on its site by 45 percent as part of its first such fee increases since 2001.

The fee hike, which was accompanied by a pledge to credit sellers for listing fees when initial winning bidders fail to pay, underscores eBay's powerful position in online auctions, one analyst said.

"Prices are something that we constantly evaluate. It came time to do it," eBay spokesman Hani Durzy told Reuters.

Past fee increases have not disrupted the upward trend of gross merchandise sales, or the total value of goods sold at eBay, he said.

San Jose, California-based eBay on Monday unveiled the new fee schedule for its main auction site and its specialty site, eBay Motors. The changes, which include a price cut on promotional placement, will go into effect in the coming weeks.

Listing fees, which eBay calls insertion fees, on Feb. 2 will go up 17 percent for items with starting prices of $1 to $9.99. Fees for items priced at $10 to $499.99 will rise 9.1 percent. Items priced at $500 and up will carry a fee of $4.80, a 45 percent increase from the current listing fee of $3.30.

Meanwhile, the fee for listing the cheapest items - those priced between a penny and 99 cents - will remain 30 cents.

Insertion fees for motorcycles on eBay Motors will be raised to $30 from $25. Transaction services fees for motorcycles also will increase to $30 from $25.

The 10-day listing fee on eBay.com and eBay Motors Parts 5.

Ebay's Durzy said he expected a mixed reaction from sellers. "Some are going to be more pleased about it than others. It's probably a little too early to tell," he said.

But the new pricing came as no surprise to U.S. Bancorp Piper Jaffray analyst Safa Rashtchy.

"It's a positive indication that they can do it. ...that they can absorb any shock from it," Rashtchy said.

On other fronts, users of eBay's Seller's Assistant Pro software which helps bulk sellers manage their listings, will see monthly subscription fees rise to $24.99 from $15.99.

Also starting on Feb. 2, eBay will issue fee credits when sellers relist and successfully sell items after an earlier sale failed to close because the winning bidder did not pay.

The company also is cutting the cost to have items added to a rotation of featured listings that appear at the bottom right side of the eBay.com home page.

On Jan. 31 eBay will cut that fee permanently to the current promotional fee of $39.95 for a single item, compared with the prior fee of $99.95. The fee for multiple items, which had been $199.95, will be cut to match the

current promotional price of $79.95.

A full listing of changes to U.S. fees is available at www2.ebay.com/aw/marketing.shtml. Some international eBay sites also have changed their fee structures, eBay said.

## MSN: From Free to Fee

Microsoft took the wraps off its new MSN portal, which offers features that are intended to appeal to broadband users who want additional services. The Web portal business is heating up as firms try to build their subscription lists.

The MSN service is designed for users who have a high-speed service from a provider, in many cases one of Microsoft’s partners, such as Comcast or Verizon.

MSN Premium, priced at US$9.95 a month, offers virus protection, a pop-up filter, parental controls, e-mail support, and other services. MSN Plus is a scaled down version at $5.95 monthly. Much of the content on MSN’s pages will remain free for now.

Under the old dial-up model, MSN’s content was merely the add-on to the service people really wanted: a way to surf the Internet. The new Web portal unveiled Thursday focuses on offering services - sans the Internet connection - that people actually will pay for.

Yahoo started the ball rolling when CEO Terry Semel transformed the portal by packaging features into essentially a basket of value propositions that have bucked the stigma of having to be free. AOL is expected to follow the trend.

"Is there room for more than those firms?" IDC analyst Jonathan Gaw asked, referring to MSN, Yahoo and AOL. "No, they can build out their services much more efficiently than anyone else can," he told NewsFactor. Other firms - like NetZero or EarthLink - do not have the massive numbers of subscribers needed to spread the costs of development.

Even then, making money on the Internet is a lot harder than it looks, as Microsoft can attest. The company says its MSN unit brought in more cash than it expended for the first time ever in the third quarter of 2003. Not many companies have the capital to sit and wait for a property to bloom.

Like Yahoo’s transformation, MSN’s Premium service is a way to shift users from free services to fee-based ones. But this is just an early step. "The portal services - like security, e-mail, communications and content - are things we’ve been fairly familiar with over the years," Gaw remarked. "But as people use the Internet and networking more intensively, these things are only going to expand."

One new service could be the management of home audio and video players. "As networking technologies become more pervasive - going from the desktop into consumer electronics," added Gaw, "you’ll see Yahoo, MSN and AOL going right along with them."

## Ebay Settles Patent Suit With Tumbleweed

Online auction giant eBay Inc. has settled a lawsuit alleging its online payment service had been violating a patent governing the personalized e-mail links sent to customers.

The settlement includes a cross-licensing agreement between San Jose-based eBay and Redwood City-based Tumbleweed Communications Corp., which filed the suit against PayPal in May 2002. Tumbleweed later expanded the suit to include eBay after the auction service acquired PayPal for $1.5 billion. EBay has repeatedly denied Tumbleweed’s allegations.

Neither eBay nor Tumbleweed disclosed the financial terms of their licensing agreement. Tumbleweed had alleged PayPal violated its patents for sending personalized links through e-mail. PayPal uses the links to alert customers about a financial transaction.

Tumbleweed, a tiny software company with less than $50 million in annual revenue, previously has used the same patent claim to obtain licensing agreements with several other companies, including Hallmark and American Greetings.

"We are pleased to put our differences behind us," said Jeff Smith, Tumbleweed’s chief executive officer.

Ebay said it plans to work with Tumbleweed on ways to improve e-mail security.

## ’Helpful’ Hacker Readies Guilty Plea

Adrian Lamo, the hacker who made a name for himself by breaching the security of large companies and then offering to help them fix the vulnerabilities he found for free, is expected to enter a guilty plea on a federal hacking charge later this week.

Lamo told InformationWeek during a telephone interview that he was flying from his California residence this week for a court appearance in New York, where he would plead to a single federal hacking charge. Lamo didn’t discuss the details of his plea or the charge for which he expects to plead, other than to say, "I believe it’s the right thing to do."

"I always said that I was aware that my actions have consequences and that I wouldn’t deny the consequences of my actions," he said late Monday.

Sean Hecker, Lamo’s federal public defender, confirmed Tuesday that Lamo is scheduled for a hearing Thursday but wouldn’t provide details other to confirm that a "potential guilty plea" will be discussed.

If a plea is entered, the next step would be a sentencing hearing, which should occur in about three months, Hecker said.

A federal compliant was filed in August in the Southern District of New York as a result of Lamo’s alleged hack into the private network of The New York Times in February 2002. The complaint alleges that Lamo’s access caused $25,000 in damages as a result of his adding his name to the paper’s Op-Ed database. The complaint also alleges Lamo racked up $300,000 in

LexisNexis fees as a result of his searching for news stories containing, among other things, his name.

The federal complaint also lists a string of other intrusions allegedly conducted by Lamo - who, in each case, after breaching the security of the company, offered to help the company fix the flaws. After the security holes were plugged, Lamo then would make the breach public through the media.

The companies Lamo allegedly breached with his hack-and-tell style include Excite@Home, Yahoo, Microsoft, MCI-WorldCom, and SBC Ameritech. Some of the companies Lamo allegedly hacked, including WorldCom, thanked him for finding and helping to fix the security holes he uncovered.

In early September, Lamo was released into the custody of his parents on a $250,000 bond that they secured. Lamo says he’s attending college with a focus on journalism and is seeking employment.

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